



## **INTRODUCTION**

The Town of Leesburg is located near the center of Loudoun County on the western fringe of the greater metropolitan Washington, D.C., area (Map 0.1). As the seat of county government and center of trade, a mutual interdependence between the town and the county has developed over the decades. Coordination of town and county planning and development review has grown increasingly important.

Section 15.1.455 of the Code of Virginia permits municipalities to include the planning of adjacent unincorporated land in the municipal plan. Leesburg has historically considered adjacent territory in planning the most efficient land use, transportation and public utility system for the Leesburg area.

The town provided input for the Leesburg Area Management Plan (LAMP). The original LAMP area was prepared by Loudoun County as an element of the county's Comprehensive Plan in November 1982. Since then, the town worked with the county to define the Leesburg urban growth area delineated in the county's 1991 General Plan. The LAMP provided specific land use planning for a 50-square mile area around Leesburg bounded generally by Limestone Branch on the north, the Potomac River and Route 659 on the east, Goose Creek on the south, and Hogback Mountain on the west. This area was divided into 10 planning districts, one of which was the town itself. The LAMP furnished detailed land use planning for the other nine. Three of these districts and part of two others have subsequently been incorporated into the town.

In 1983 the Town of Leesburg and Loudoun County negotiated an agreement governing the town's annexation of approximately 7.5 square miles of county territory. The goal of the negotiation was to efficiently provide the full range of government services in the annexed area and to develop a sound working relationship between the town and county. The agreement took effect January 1, 1984.

The annexation agreement included Annexation Area Development Policies (AADP's) which carried forward the county's previous planning for the annexed area as expressed in the LAMP. The AADPs also established a framework for cooperative planning and development review by the town and county within the Urban Growth Area. This framework included the following agreed positions:

- Leesburg will remain the major commercial, industrial and residential growth center for approximately 300 square miles of the county west of Goose Creek.
- In order to concentrate growth in and around the town, central water and sewer facility extensions and package treatment plants were precluded in the LAMP planning area outside the annexation area until January 1, 1994.
- The county and the town will preserve the 100-year floodplains of the major water courses such as Goose, Sycolin and Tuscarora creeks and the Potomac River through purchase, easement or other means.
- The town and county shall refer land development applications and proposed revisions to relevant planning documents to each other for review and comment.

With the adoption of the 1991 County Plan, Choices and Changes, and subsequent area amendments to that plan such as the Toll Road Plan in 1995, the influence of the LAMP as a policy guide has been reduced in scope. The current LAMP area is now limited to the areas of the Urban Growth Area outside of the Toll Road Plan area.

Given the town's present involvement and future interests in the surrounding area, it is appropriate for the Town Plan to express recommendations for the planning and development of the Greater Leesburg Area. The following subjects are addressed in this context: Boundaries, Land Use, Utilities and Transportation.

## **BOUNDARIES**

### **Overview**

If Leesburg and Loudoun County are to avoid the continuous sprawl that characterizes unfocused growth, it is essential to set well-defined and strongly defensible planning area boundaries. This plan endorses the concept of an Urban Growth Area (UGA) which establishes an intermediate development staging boundary to ensure orderly and efficient outward growth of the town. The UGA is defined by major natural features; its defense is dependent on strong policy, planning and regulatory backing of both the town and the county. The relative sizes of the existing town boundary and the UGA are shown below:

**Table 1.1**  
**Relative Size of the Corporate Limits and Urban Growth Area**

<b>Geographic Area</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Percentage of Total Area</b>
1996 Corporate Limits	7,434	52%
Urban Growth Area (UGA)	7,000	48%
Total Area	14,434	100%

### **Urban Growth Area**

Loudoun County's General Plan designates an Urban Growth Area (UGA) around the incorporated towns in the county. The purpose of the UGA is to direct growth to areas where public services such as sewer and water are more readily available and to preserve the rural character of the surrounding land. This County Plan takes the policy position that public sewer and water extensions will be restricted to UGAs and that the towns will provide those utilities; as water and sewer service is extended into UGAs, the county will encourage annexation of the area by the towns.

Leesburg's UGA, designated by the county in consultation with the town, is shown on Map 1.1. The UGA is defined by a combination of natural and political boundaries: the Potomac River and Goose Creek on the east, Sycolin Creek on the south, and essentially the existing town limits on the west and north. About 7,000 acres in size, the UGA is situated almost entirely to the south and east of town. The County Plan projects the Town's growth will be concentrated toward the urbanizing eastern part of the county, with Leesburg serving as the western anchor for development along the Route 7 and Dulles Greenway corridors.

Because the UGA is an area for potential annexation, any development proposed there is of paramount concern to the town. The recommendations in the following sections therefore focus primarily on the UGA and are intended to ensure that planning for the UGA is consistent with this plan's vision of the future Leesburg.

### Town Corporate Limits

Leesburg's corporate limits are indicated on Map 1.1. The area encompasses 7,434 acres after annexation of about 7.2 square miles (4,589 acres) in 1984, nearly doubling the town's former land area.

### LAND USE

The Greater Leesburg Area, excluding the town itself, is about 34,000 acres or 53.4 square miles in size. It has a population of about 3,000. Southeast of Leesburg near Sycolin and Goose Creeks there are some active industrial uses such as quarries, a sawmill, and a recycling operation. Otherwise, current land use is almost entirely agricultural/forestal or rural residential. The zoning breakdown by county zoning classification is shown in Table 1.2.

**Table 1.2**  
**Zoning in the Greater Leesburg Area - 1995**  
**(Excluding the Town of Leesburg)**

Loudoun County Zoning District		Approx. Acres	% of total
<b>A-3:</b>	Agricultural residential (3-acre minimum lot size)	29,573	87.0%
<b>CR-1 &amp; CR-2:</b>	Countryside residential (1 & 2 units per acre)	235	0.7%
<b>PD-H3:</b>	Planned development - residential (3 units per acre)	2,171	6.4%
<b>PD-H4:</b>	Planned development - residential (4 units per acre)	321	0.9%
<b>PD-SA:</b>	Planned development - special activity (e.g., institutional)	550	1.6%
<b>RC:</b>	Rural commercial	3	-
<b>MR-HI:</b>	Mineral resources - heavy industry	800	2.4%
<b>PD-GI:</b>	Planned development - general industry	297	0.9%
<b>PD-IP:</b>	Planned development - industrial park	50	0.2%
<b>TOTAL:</b>		34,000	100.0%

Zoning generally reflects the current land use, although several larger tracts in the Leesburg vicinity have been rezoned for future development. These include three properties totaling about 450 acres which have been proposed for light industrial development; two are located on the southeast edge of Leesburg and the third is near the airport. All are within the Leesburg Urban Growth Area. About half of Xerox Corporation's 2,267-acre Lansdowne planned development is situated astride Goose Creek within the Greater Leesburg Area boundaries. The portion west of Goose Creek--about 200 acres--is in the UGA and is planned for residential use. Of the Xerox property east of Goose Creek, 58 acres are planned for educational use, and 588 acres for office use. The remainder is proposed for residential development.

Most of the properties zoned CR-1 and CR-2 are located adjacent to the town's corporate limits. Except for a group of CR-1 parcels in the Fort Johnson area on the northwest edge of Leesburg, all are within the Urban Growth Area.

Land use recommendations in the county's LAMP were confined primarily to the area around Leesburg within the then-current Urban Limit Line (ULL); almost all of that land is now within the town's corporate limits. Outside the ULL, the LAMP recommended continuation of existing institutional and park uses as well as an open space easement on a sizeable area south and west of the Oatlands estate.

The county's 1991 General Plan envisions continuing westward expansion of the eastern Loudoun urbanized area toward Leesburg. In the Leesburg area, the plan recommends primarily residential development north of Route 7 and to the south and west of the Dulles Greenway corridor as far as Route 621 south of

Sycolin Creek and as far as Route 15 north of the Sycolin. Between the Dulles Greenway and Route 7, business uses (large-scale retail trade, office and light industrial uses) are recommended. The Plan calls for continuation of industrial uses in the quarry area southeast of town. The remainder of the Greater Leesburg Area is treated as a rural area in the County Plan.

### UTILITIES

Leesburg has long planned for providing sewer and water service beyond its boundaries. The town's Sewer and Water Master Plan is based on a projected service area that covers about half of the Greater Leesburg Area, including most of the Urban Growth Area. The service area was proposed in the mid-1970's as the potential service area for a new town sewage treatment plant; it includes the watersheds of Big Spring, Cattail Branch, Tuscarora Creek and its Dry Mill Branch, and the lower portion of Sycolin Creek, including a northern branch of the Sycolin.

The service area was defined in terms of physical characteristics of the land rather than political boundaries; on that basis, it could reasonably include all of the Sycolin watershed. Both the water treatment plant and the water pollution control facility have been expanded to meet growing demand and are capable of further expansion. (See Public Services element.)

While the capability exists to serve an extended area, the public and private costs associated with extending service make it prudent to manage growth so that new development occurs as close as possible to existing utility service infrastructure. It has been the policy of Loudoun County to discourage development requiring public sewer and water service or package treatment plants outside town Urban Growth Areas. However, the County encourages the development of communal treatment facilities in the rural areas for the development of rural villages and for institutional uses.

### TRANSPORTATION

Leesburg is situated at the crossroads of three major regional highways: U.S. Route 15, State Route 7, and the recently completed Dulles Greenway. Collectively, these roads carry a considerable volume of commercial and commuter traffic. Route 7 is particularly important as a direct link connecting western suburban areas in Virginia and West Virginia with the more densely developed areas of Northern Virginia and Washington, D.C. Route 15 provides an alternative to congested Interstate 95 for north-south traffic in the mid-Atlantic region; it has the first bridge crossing the Potomac west of the Capital Beltway (Interstate 495). The Route 15 corridor and a parallel corridor between Leesburg and Goose Creek have been suggested as possible locations of a future "outer beltway" or western bypass of the Washington area. The Greenway, a 14-mile extension of the existing Dulles Toll Road from Dulles Airport to the Route 7/15 Bypass in Leesburg, is not fully utilized and is expected to be a significant traffic reliever to Route 7 in the coming years.

Route 15 and Route 7 also serve as the principal local arterial roads of the Greater Leesburg Area, which contributes to congestion, particularly on Route 7. A significant project that will address both local and regional needs is major improvements to Route 7. The improvements planned for Route 7 include upgrading to six lanes between the bypass and Route 28 and ultimate conversion to limited access between Leesburg and the Fairfax County line. West of Leesburg, two lanes are being added to make Route 7 a four-lane divided highway between Leesburg and Winchester.

While Route 7 will continue to serve local as well as through traffic, the Dulles Greenway will have limited use for local traffic. Initially, its only access points in the GLA will be its connection to the Route 7/15

Bypass and the interchange with Belmont Ridge Road (Route 659) on the GLA boundary. Eventually, two additional interchanges within the GLA are planned, one with Battlefield Parkway in Leesburg and another with a realignment of Route 653 south of Leesburg Airport.

The realignment and upgrade of Route 653 is one of the major improvements planned for the local network in the GLA. It will be the principal arterial through the Urban Growth Area, linking Route 7 East, the Dulles Greenway, and Route 15 South. Another is the proposed upgrading of Route 643 to arterial standards in the Greater Leesburg Area. East of Goose Creek, Route 643 will connect into a realignment of Route 640 and Route 625 to form a third arterial route (in addition to Route 7 and the Dulles Greenway) linking Leesburg with the Route 28/Dulles corridor.

The portion of realigned Route 653 between Route 7 and the Dulles Greenway and the upgrading of Route 643 are both essential for any significant development to occur in the portion of Leesburg's Urban Growth Area designated for "business community" land uses. With the Dulles Greenway and the improved Route 7 both limited access facilities, primary access to properties in that area will be from Routes 643 and 653.

The Dulles Greenway offers important opportunities to expand the availability of transit alternatives in Leesburg and the Greater Leesburg Area. The road design includes space for future addition of rail in the median strip. This is a long-range potentiality; at the present time state transit planners propose rail service in the Dulles Toll Road/Greenway corridor only as far west as Dulles Airport initially. An option is the provision of a park-and-ride lot in connection with bus service using the Dulles Greenway. Leesburg is a strategic location for an intermodal transfer point. Several commuter routes converge in Leesburg, feeding traffic onto Route 7 East. A park-and-ride facility at or near a Dulles Greenway interchange in the vicinity of the airport would be easily accessible to this traffic via the future system of limited access roads around Leesburg. Such a location could also make productive use of land that has use restrictions because of proximity to the airport.

In addition to these major roads, a number of transportation options exist in the Urban Growth Area. These include the Western Regional Park and Ride Facility, ridesharing, commuter bus services, and the potential for future rail service to eastern Loudoun County.

## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

### **Goals**

- To influence land use decisions within the Urban Growth Area.
- To preserve and enhance Leesburg's role as Loudoun County's principal government, commercial and cultural center and a major residential center.

### **Objectives**

- Assure that the Town of Leesburg will continue to serve as the county seat and principal location of county government offices.
- Encourage the phasing of development gradually outward from the town limits within the Urban Growth Area.
- Protection of the western ridge line and the 100-year floodplains of Goose Creek, Sycolin Creek, Big Spring and Limestone Branch as visual features that define the character of the Leesburg area.

## **IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM**

### **Policies**

The Plan recognizes the two major town interests in the Urban Growth Area as intergovernmental coordination in planning and the protection of the town's identity as a separate urban area.

### **Land Use**

The Town of Leesburg endorses this general development pattern. The following policies are intended to guide the town's response to county referrals of development proposals in the Urban Growth Area.

1. Techniques such as clustering and density bonuses should be employed to protect the natural character of the greenbelt at the edges of the Urban Growth Area.
2. Generous setbacks (not less than setbacks required by current ordinances) and extensive landscaping should be employed in any development along major transportation corridors such as Routes 7 and 15 to maintain scenic views and identifiable entrances to the urbanized portion of the Urban Growth Area.
3. The town encourages development of employment uses in the industrial area southeast of town and around the municipal airport, particularly within the Ldn 65+ (a noise level inappropriate for residential uses) noise zone. Development in the airport area will be compatible with airport height and use restrictions. (See Environment Element for specific policies regarding airport noise.)
4. Aside from areas where employment uses are preferred, the town encourages mixed use development in the Urban Growth Area between the Route 7 and Dulles Greenway corridors.
5. The town encourages establishment of a major regional retail center in the Dulles Greenway corridor in the vicinity of the future interchange with relocated Route 653.
6. The western ridgeline and the Goose and Sycolin Creek 100-year floodplains will be treated as permanent greenbelts around the town.

### **Utilities**

The following policies are formulated with reference to current agreements between the Town of Leesburg and Loudoun County and relevant county planning policies.

1. Town infrastructure shall be extended into the urban growth area only where property to be served in the urban growth is adjacent to developed property within the town limits.
2. There will be no public water and sewer extensions or package treatment plants outside the Urban Growth Area unless by mutual agreement between the town and county.
3. Development within Leesburg's Urban Growth Area will be served by public sewer and water provided by the Town of Leesburg at the town's option.
4. Extension of sewer and water service by the Town of Leesburg to areas outside the town limits will be grounds for annexation of those areas.

**Transportation**

1. The town strongly supports extension of bus and rail service to Leesburg in the Dulles Greenway corridor.
2. Upgrading of Route 643 and relocation of Route 653 will be priority transportation improvements sought by the town and county.
3. The town encourages location of a park-and-ride facility at an intersection of the Dulles Greenway interchange with Battlefield Parkway.

**Action Program**

The town will undertake the following actions to influence planning for the Urban Growth Area:

1. The town will develop an agreement with Loudoun County that gives the town effective control and final approval authority over development within the town's Urban Growth Area.
2. The town and county will develop a joint review process for development within the Urban Growth Area.
3. The town will work closely with the county and the Virginia Department of Transportation to secure upgrade of Routes 643 and 653 in the Urban Growth Area through a combination of public and private financing.
4. The town and county will work through state and regional transportation agencies to implement the Route 7 Corridor Plan.
5. The town and county will undertake a study to determine the most appropriate means of providing utility service in those parts of the Urban Growth Area.
6. The town will be actively involved in determination of any new planning area to replace L.A.M.P.

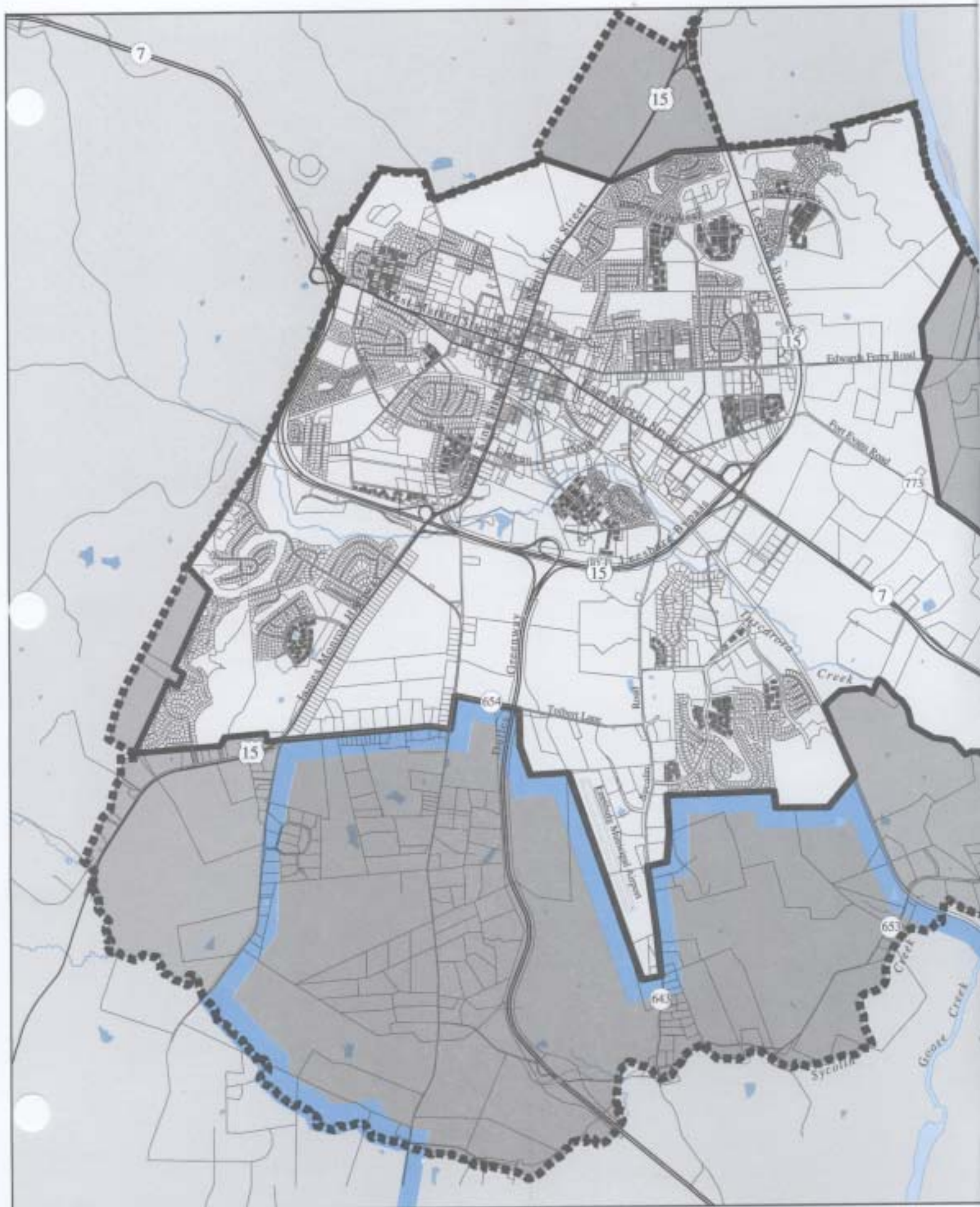
**Annual Urban Growth Area Element Review Criteria**

In order to measure the town's success in influencing development in the surrounding area of interest to the town, track the following:

- Amendments to the AADPs, the LAMP, and other county planning documents affecting the GLA.
- Changes in land use, zoning and special use permits in the area.
- Demand for utility service.
- Condition of the Goose and Sycolin 100-year floodplains.



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# The Town of Leesburg in Virginia

## Leesburg Urban Growth Area Boundary



- |               |                            |
|---------------|----------------------------|
| Town Boundary | Urban Growth Area Boundary |
| Major Roads   | Secondary Roads            |
| Water         | Toll Road Plan Area        |

Scale: One Inch Equals Approximately 3,200 Feet.

This map should be interpreted only in conjunction with the appropriate text of the 1997 Town Plan.